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Testimony before the House Energy and Technology Committee
Chairman: Rep. Mike Nofs
October 11, 2005

ISD Panel: Karen McFee – Ottawa ISD
David Schulte – Shiawassee ISD / SITES
Dave Childs – Gratiot Isabella ISD / MMNET
Rebecca Rocho, Calhoun ISD / DIAL

ISDs primary concern with the Michigan Telecommunications Act revisions in HB 5237 are in Section 307 of the bill. This is the section of the Act that defines educational institution provisions, network consortia and regulates the sale of excess capacity.

The 1995 rewrite of the MTA encouraged educational institutions to develop networks, especially where no such consumer access was available – both to provide for school districts and their staff as well as to acclimate student instruction to the exploding field of technology tools.

We hope the following case studies will give you a better awareness of how and why our networks were created and the residual benefit accrued in each of these areas of Michigan. The partners in the networks are as unique as the areas themselves.

There are 21 similar networks constructed by ISDs (many including multiple ISDs and community partners) to serve our schools and communities in a variety of ways. There are 10 more ISD consortia that would like to provide telecommunication access to their school districts but find it cost prohibitive at the present time to do so. Any changes to Section 307 will impact those future decisions.

During the 1995 rewrite, the sale of excess capacity for educational institution networks was discussed at length and thoughtfully regulated; we are required to do business in the open bid environment, sale is limited to 25% of our total capacity and it must be sold at the current market rate. These are sound regulations that should serve the current marketplace equally well.

These networks provide education, government and community access, often where it does not or would not otherwise exist – at a tremendous cost savings to the consumer and school district alike. Often, the educational institution network provides a short-term stop gap access until a private vendor can complete a build or service connection.

We strongly encourage you to retain current statutory language in Section 307.